Word and deed

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Word and Deed: Brendan Kennelly's *Antigone*[*]

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Brendan Kennelly's version of Sophocles' *Antigone* was completed in July 1984 and received its first performance at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, on 28 April 1986.[1] Kennelly's play is one of a remarkable group of mid-1980s Irish versions of *Antigone* that includes an unpublished version by Aidan Carl Mathews (*alias* Matthews) and a published one by Tom Paulin, *The Riot Act*, staged by Field Day Theatre Company at the Guildhall, Derry, in 1984.[2]

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[*] My thanks to audiences in Maynooth and Galway for opportunities to present and discuss the arguments of this article, and to David Scourfield and the NUIG Classics Society for their invitations.

[1] For the dates, see Roche (1988) 238, (2005) 151. Further on the play, see Roche (1988) 237-47; Arkins (2002) 207-8, (2005) 153-4; McDonald (2005) 126-9; Roche (2005) 150-5; Harkin (2008) 295-7; Arkins (2010) 44-5; Macintosh (2011) 97-100. The published version, Kennelly (1996), also contains discussions by T. Brown, K. McCracken, and Kennelly himself.

[2] On the 1980s versions, see Roche (1988), which also includes a discussion of Pat Murphy's 1984 film, *Anne Devlin* (pp. 247-9). See also Murray (1991); McDonald (2002), (2005); Arkins (2005) 151-3; Younger (2006); Harkin (2008). On Paulin (1985), see esp. Paulin (2002), with further discussion in Roche (1988) 221-9; Richtarik (1994) 216-28; Jones (1997) 233-9; Cleary (1999) 524-31; Arkins (2002) 208; Deane (2002); McDonald (2002) 53-7; Arkins (2005) 151-2; Harkin (2008) 297-300; Arkins (2010) 37-9; Macintosh (2011) 92-7. On Mathews' unpublished *Antigone: A Version*, see

Paulin's is very much a Northern Irish version, prompted by the Troubles in general and the treatment of the IRA hunger strikers in particular, and conceived as a direct riposte to Conor Cruise O'Brien's presentation of the Civil Rights movement through the lens of the contrasting positions of Antigone and Ismene. Kennelly's version resembles Paulin's to the extent that it comes down firmly on Antigone's side, but it bears a much less direct relationship to specific political issues; in that respect, it has been described as 'the least obviously Hibernicized' of the 1980s versions.[3]

Antigone, Love's Heroine

In Kennelly, Antigone's heroism and integrity are never in doubt, and Creon is firmly in the wrong from the outset.[4] What Creon opposes above all in this version is love, in formulations that subsume the original *erôs* and *philia* of Sophocles' version, but also (one strongly suspects) have strong connotations of Christian *agapê*. Already in the prologue (p. 8),[5] Antigone presents her

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e.g. Roche (1988) 230-7; Arkins (2002) 208-9, (2005) 152-3, and (2010) 42-3; Younger (2006), 154-5; McDonald (2002) 58. Similarly unpublished are Conall Morrison's 2003 *Antigone* (Harkin (2008) 300-3; Arkins (2010) 39-40) and Stacey Gregg's 2007 *Ismene* (Remoundou-Howley (2011)); for other Irish versions see Macintosh (2011). For a full list of Irish versions of Greek tragedy, see Arkins (2010) 22-3 (and *passim* for further discussion).

[3] Roche (1988) 237.

[4] Roche (1988) 238-41 (cf. (2005) 151) compares Kennelly's Creon in *Antigone* to his Cromwell in his 1983 poem of that name.

[5] All page references in the text are to Kennelly (1996).

proposed defiance of Creon's edict as a test of Ismene's 'loyalty and love'. At the end of that scene, Ismene declares her love ('I love you, my sister', p. 11), but Antigone already hates her for a 'word' that she interprets as cowardice (p. 11), one that amounts to no more than 'despicable silence' (p. 10). Antigone has already indicated where her own love truly lies (p. 10):

I have more love
For the noble dead
Than for the ambitious living.
I would prefer to live
Among the dead in love
Than among the living in frustration.[6]

Though Antigone's love, as in Sophocles, is directed especially towards the dead and inspires hatred for a sister who loves her, the disturbing implications of this are less prominent in Kennelly than they are in Sophocles. Ismene's refusal to participate in the burial legitimizes Antigone's harsh rejection rather than providing a perspective which highlights the magnitude of Antigone's transgression. Her reluctance is based, even more than in Sophocles, on a sense of women's inferiority to men (p. 11):

A woman against the State
Is a grain of sand against the sea.
...
Do it if you can. But you would

[6] Cf. Creon on p. 34: she 'gives her love to the shameful dead'.

Try to do what no strong man
Can do. If a man can't do it,
How can a woman?

This, as we shall see, is a view that is contradicted by the subsequent action of the play.

Love thus remains Antigone's driving force – 'I have no wish to school myself in hate', she says (p. 24), 'I want to love'. This is Kennelly's version of Sophocles' line 523 (the famous οὔτοι συνέχθειν, ἀλλὰ συμφιλεῖν ἔφυν), a brilliant way of bringing out the implication that hatred is learned, while love is natural. It is this love that causes Antigone's death. She tells Ismene (p. 25):

You chose to live for fear
I chose to die for love.

In this way, love is central to Antigone's offence. For Creon, threatening to have her killed before Haemon's eyes, she is 'the criminal bride', but in Kennelly's version of the Third Stasimon, the Hymn to Eros, it is Love itself that is 'the truest crime' (p. 34). Hence Antigone laments (p. 38):

He sends me to my grave
Because I acted out my love.

Creon is thus a 'killer of love' (ibid.):

Because I would not kill my love,
My love kills me.
In this place, killers of love go free.

For Kennelly's Chorus (a single character) a daughter is 'the light of life' (ibid.):

The better part of man's blood
The transformation of crude manhood
Into a creature to be loved by men ...

But Antigone is consigned to 'a black hole'; a 'Daughter in the darkness', she is a 'Victim of love / Victim of law' (ibid.). Yet though Creon's conduct consigns love to the darkness, just as his exposure of the corpse (according to Tiresias, p. 41) 'poisons the very bed of love', there is hope that love can prove resilient – Kennelly's version of the Third Stasimon includes the observation that Love is 'always dying, yet never completely dead' (p. 34).

The ambivalence of love in the House of Oedipus is not entirely effaced: when the Chorus suggests that the black hole in the rocks to which Antigone is being despatched may be Oedipus' legacy to his daughter, she replies (p. 36, a version of Sophocles' lines 857-71):

You have touched my deepest fear.
You have opened my father's head.
You have looked into my mother's bed.
You know why I have given my life
To the unburied dead.

And now I go to them.

I go to my father, foolish boy, foolish lover, foolish man.

I go to my mother, kind soul, foolish woman.

I go to my brother whose corpse I sprinkled with dust.

I go to the gods, the gods' beds, the gods' lust.

O my loving brother, my love for you
Has robbed me of my life.

And so Antigone's love for her brother does recapitulate her parents' incestuous love, and the 'black hole' seems to represent, on one level, a return to the incestuous womb from which she and her siblings sprang. Just so, the Second Stasimon, on the generations of suffering in Antigone's family (but also on men's tendency to mistake evil for good), includes the lines (p. 27):

Brothers will love sisters; sisters, brothers,
And when that love is spent, what will they do?

Yet Kennelly, it seems, takes a rather Hegelian line with regard to the love between brother and sister.[7] In an interview, he describes his motivation in undertaking to compose a version of *Antigone*:

> I wanted to explore sisterhood, the loyalty a sister will

[7] For Hegel's idealization of the love between brother and sister, see *Phänomenologie* VI A in Hegel (1986) iii. 335-8, translated in Paolucci and Paolucci (1962) 267-9. On the particularity of Hegel's argument in this passage, see (among others), Steiner (1985) 12-14, 33; Butler (2000) 13-14.

> show to a brother, against law, against marriage, against everything. There's no relation like it; it has all the passion of your whole nature, this side of incest. I don't know if it was brought out in the production, but it was a study of a girl all of whose impulses defied everything, in order to bury the boy, to give him dignity.[8]

Kennelly goes further than Hegel in seeing the affinity between Antigone's love for Polynices and the love between Oedipus and Jocasta that gave birth to them both, but his idealization of the sibling relationship is similar.

But Antigone's love does not stop there. As an embodiment of the power of love in general she also reciprocates the love of Haemon.[9] Sophocles' line 570, in which Ismene says no other union would be as fitting for Haemon and Antgone (οὐχ ὥς γ' ἐκείνῳ τῇδέ τ' ἦν ἡρμοσμένα), becomes (p. 26):

But never again can there be such love
As bound these two together.
Their two hearts are one.
If Antigone dies, so does your son.

As in the 1502 Aldine edition of Sophocles (and in Jebb's, no doubt one of the translations used by Kennelly),[10] Ismene's next line (572) is attributed to Antigone: 'Haemon, my beloved. / Your father wrongs

[8] Pine (1990) 22.
[9] Cf. Arkins (2002) 208, (2005) 154, (2010) 45; McDonald (2005) 129.
[10] Kennelly 'worked from late nineteenth-century translations, six or seven of them' (quoted in Roche (1988) 237).

you deeply now.' When, after the catastrophe, Creon laments (p. 48) 'I killed my son's love', the phrase resounds in multiple senses.

Kennelly's Chorus is also used to guide the audience's interpretation more directly than in the original. His announcement of Haemon's entrance, for example, is condemnatory of Creon in a way that the original is not (p. 28):

How bitter is his heart
For the thwarted hope of his love
Or rather
For his marriage sentenced to death
By his father? Do you dare
Sentence your son's future to death?
Do you dare call yourself his father?

Similarly, he announces Antigone's final appearance in the next Act, with an admiration that goes beyond the sympathy expressed in the original (p. 34, rendering lines 801-5):

Now, I move beyond the bounds of loyalty,
All Kings I scorn, for Antigone I cry,
Antigone, passing to the darkness
Where she must die, Antigone
Whose fiery heart would never let her tell a lie.

Already the Guard had added the unSophoclean comment (p. 21) that 'Something about her is so / Noble, so unafraid.'

Word and Deed

As will already be clear, this is a version which has a strong and thought-provoking thematic and conceptual structure of its own; perhaps its greatest success lies in the ways in which it takes Sophoclean themes and transforms them into a new and integrated whole. One is immediately struck by the profuse repetition of the notion of the 'word' (seven occurrences on the first page of the translation alone), and the relation between word and deed, voice and silence, openness and secrecy provides a matrix that pervades the play.[11]

The word that initiates the play's action is Creon's edict (p. 8):

That is the word, Ismene. Hear it well.
Brood on the word, dear sister. Action will follow.

Such is the word that Creon the Good
Has laid down for you and for me ...
And he is coming here to proclaim the word
To all who do not know it.
Whoever disobeys the word of Creon
Will be stoned to death before the people.
Now that you know the word ...
You will soon prove
The nature of your loyalty and love ...

Ismene, however, counsels silence (p. 10):

[11] Cf. Roche (1988) 237-8, 241-3, 245, (2005) 152.

Ismene
At least, tell no one what you plan to do.
Be secret. So will I.

Antigone
Go shout it from the roof-tops, Ismene.
Forget your despicable silence.
Your silence will bring contempt on you
In the end. Be true, not silent …
And don't try to turn me
Into a secret version of your cowardly self.

The themes of word, voice, silence, and secrecy pervade the play. Creon regards 'any leader of the State' who 'keeps his best counsel secret' as 'a base man' (p. 12). He affirms (p. 13):

I would not be silent if I saw
My people threatened.
Who can be silent on such matters
If he is loyal to his people?
Who can be silent if he understands the law?

Even the Guard has 'his own word', though he did 'not do the deed'. As he tells us, 'I decided I should come here / And tell you every word. I would be open and plain' (p. 14). He concludes (p. 16):

Not one word must be kept secret –
The whole thing must be told to you.
Only a bad guard would be silent on such a matter.

In the same vein, Antigone contrasts the openness of her words with the silence of the people (p. 23): 'No, my words are theirs, theirs mine, / But they seal their lips for fear of you.' For his part, Haemon (p. 30) voices 'the words that circulate in secret'.

Antigone, of course, defies Creon's word (p. 21):

Yours is the word of a man,
Not of a god ...
If I seem foolish to you, this may be
Because you are a foolish man, a foolish judge,
Spreading your word with foolish law.

Creon's word was a speech act that left a corpse unburied and provoked Antigone's reaction. Antigone responds with a deed that is also her word. Thus, between Antigone and Creon there emerges a quasi-Hegelian conflict of word *versus* word.

For Antigone, however, the word is actualized in a deed which affirms her being (p. 22):

I sought to bury my brother.
That is my word, my deed.
Word and deed are one in me.

This distinguishes Antigone from Ismene, 'a sister in mere words' (p. 25), but also from Creon. He, the Guard suggests, has a tendency to confuse word and deed (p. 17):

Guard

May I speak a word? Or should I just leave?

Creon
Even now your words offend me.

Guard
Are your ears offended, or your soul?

Creon
How would you know where and how I am offended?

Guard
The deed offends your mind,
My words offend your ears.

Ultimately, Creon's deeds diverge from his word, and the initiative for action passes to the words of others (p. 42):

Chorus
Tiresias has spoken cutting words
And his voice is always true.

Creon
His words trouble my soul.
But how can I give in now?
Yet not to surrender
May bring destruction.

Chorus
Listen to my words.

Creon
Speak.

Chorus
Release the girl.
Bury the corpse.

Creon
Is this your word to me –
That I surrender.

But it is too late: words have become deeds. Ultimately, they even become agents, as we see in the Eurydice scene. Where Sophocles gives Creon's wife nine lines in a total of 63 between her appearance and her exit (1180-1243), Kennelly has her accompanied by an Attendant whose questions underline her grief and gives her a thirty-line speech in which she herself gives voice to it (pp. 44-5). All of this emphasizes the effects that Creon's word has had. First, the Attendant (a character of Kennelly's invention, not present in Sophocles, and played, according to the cast list, by a woman) addresses Eurydice:

You stopped, as if stricken,
And muttered something about words
That knew no mercy.
Wherever they came from,
Whatever they said,
They stole the wholesome colour from your face
And turned your living beauty
Into the very picture of death.

...
Let these merciless words
Fly out of your heart like lunatic birds
Into the indifferent skies,
Rip each other to pieces
Where no human eyes
Can see their madness rage
In wing and beak and claw,
No human ears
Hear their lost, last cries.

The words that Eurydice has heard (of Haemon's death) are not only personified, but identified with the birds whose madness signals the cosmic disruption arising from Creon's exposure of Polynices' corpse, as described by Tiresias (p. 39):

I sat in the light, listening
To the wings of birds
The birds were mad with rage.
As they ripped each other in the air
I listened to the voices of their wings.
I heard what the voices said.

The winged words that Eurydice hears stand in a direct line of descent from the voices of the birds' wings, and ultimately from Creon's own word. [12] Their effect on

[12] In the same way, the Guard, as he prepares to tell how Antigone was caught in the act of burying the body, describes how the angry words that Creon used in their first encounter remained with him (p. 20):
When we reached the place where the corpse was,

Eurydice, the Attendant prophetically observes, is deadly. Eurydice's own words confirm this (p. 45):

I heard these words as I was going to pray.
My heart became a place of prayer,
Happy to speak out of its own silence
To the listening silence of my god.
But the words that shaped my prayer
Were strangled by your words of murder.

Ultimately, Creon too recognizes the destructive agency of his words (p. 47):

My son, dead by his own hand,
But more by stubborn and killing words:
My son.

Just so, the 'word' that Eurydice killed herself is 'wrong' – 'I killed Eurydice,' says Creon (ibid.). As 'the truest crime' (p. 34), Love is no crime at all; the answer to the question, 'Whose is the crime?' (p. 42) is clear. The power of the word, of the voice that breaks the silence, of the word as action, as agent, is possibly the dominant theme in Kennelly's play. He is on record as saying that 'as someone who has spent a lifetime studying – in various ways – words, I particularly admire the statement

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I could feel the threat of your curses above my head
Beating like the wings of maddened birds
About to swoop and rip my brains and heart out.
Cf. Chorus at p. 43 (in Kennelly's version of the Fifth Stasimon):
I send my words like birds into the sky
Turning to black dust in a cloud of anarchy.

in the Gospel: "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God" [John 1: 1-2]'.[13]

This nexus of meaning contextualizes Creon's refusal to listen to the words and the voices of others, as Haemon insists (p. 30):

The world is full of different words, different voices
Listen to the words, the voices.
Do not be a prisoner in yourself
Although you are a King of others.

Similarly Tiresias (p. 41):

Let him learn respect
For the living and the dead.
Let him think
All day, all night
Until he begins to suspect
He may not be always right.

The message is then driven home in a fifth stasimon that addresses not Dionysus, but the 'god of the change of heart' (p. 43):

To believe in one thing only is to live with a word alone.
A man burns others with his words, choosing his special mark;
Pity that triumphant man, god of the change of heart.

[13] Kennelly (2005) 19.

And finally, in his last words, Creon accepts the lesson (p. 48):

I hear only
The accusing words of the dead.
Why did I not listen to the words of the living?
Why did I not listen?

The multiplicity of words, of voices, is also a multiplicity of worlds – of the living and the dead, but also of mortal and divine (p. 24):

Creon
We must live on this earth.

Antigone
Yet never forget the possible difference
Of that other world of the gods.
Thinking of difference there
May make us different here.
Creon, you fear the thought of difference.

Thus, what is in Sophocles Antigone's simple dismissal of Ismene ('To some you seemed right, to others I did', line 557) becomes (p. 25):

There were two worlds, two ways.
One world approved your way,
The other mine.
You were wise in your way,
I in mine.

Difference

This plurality of worlds, words, and voices is thus a world of difference, another key term in Kennelly's version. Antigone twice locates Creon's inflexibility in his fear of difference (p. 23):

It is my love that makes me different.
It is my difference that you fear.[14]

Though Creon fails to acknowledge difference in many respects, his fundamental anxiety lies, as in Sophocles, in his concern for his status as a ruler, which rests ultimately on his concern for his status as a man. He will kill Antigone, he says, because she 'sneers' at him and creates the impression that 'No King's voice can still her / Voice' (p. 29).[15] But a deeper irritation is that the voice that opposes a King's is that of a girl (p. 21):

You, girl, staring at the earth,
Do you admit, or do you deny,
This deed?

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[14] Cf. p. 24, 'Creon, you fear the thought of difference', in a context quoted at greater length above.

[15] The emphasis, here and elsewhere, on Creon's status as a 'King' (with a capital K) perhaps reflects the play's origins in a republic which had rid itself of monarchy but still, in the 1980s and 1990s, stood in a complex relationship towards the United Kingdom. The repeated suggestion (e.g. pp. 21-4) that Creon may be a 'fool' rather than a King makes one think of Shakespeare's Lear (just as the prayer that is strangled in Eurydice's throat, p. 45, makes us think of *Hamlet*).

The condescension in his address, 'girl', is effectively highlighted in Antigone's response – 'I admit it, man.' That Antigone is a girl and Creon is a man should make no difference to the point at issue between them. But for Creon it makes all the difference in the world (p. 22):

A mere girl offers a King a double-insult.
How will a King endure it?
How will any man endure it?

I would be no man,
She would be the man
If I let her go unpunished.

Creon's horror of feminization, his fixation on his status as an adult male are thoroughly Sophoclean, but even more central in Kennelly than in Sophocles.[16] His insecurity in these respects is as apparent in his exchange with Haemon as it is in the *agôn* with Antigone (p. 32):

You are pleading for that girl.
...
You sad little boy, you woman's slave,
Out of my way.
Go, be a woman
Since you understand the thing so well ...

In the end, however, it is Creon, not the girl or the boy whose words he ignored, who is reduced to the status of

[16] Cf. Roche (1988) 242-6, (2005) 152-4.

a child. These are the play's final lines (p. 48):

And the ringing words of proud men
Are children's frightened whispers in the night.

The 'understanding' that Creon mocks in Haemon is precisely what he himself lacks. He fails as a ruler because his notion of kingship is based on patriarchal autocracy, and he fails as an individual because his closedness to others and their voices precludes self-knowledge. More particularly, in failing to know woman, he fails to acknowledge the potential of the feminine to illuminate his own identity. Antigone's words (p. 35) are addressed to Chorus, but they clearly apply to Creon, because they are framed as applying to men in general:

Mock me, if you will.
I do not doubt that you are able.
You are used to flattering men.
But I am a woman
And must go my way alone.
You know all about men,
You know all about power,
You know all about money.

But you know nothing of women.

What man
Knows anything of woman?

If he did

He would change from being a man
As men recognize a man.

If I lived,
I could change all the men of the world.

Thus the revolution that this Antigone represents is a feminist one – Kennelly has said that he sees his play as a 'feminist declaration of independence'.[17] Creon is not transformed by his encounter with the feminine, but the Chorus apparently is (p. 38). For him, Antigone (as she is led away to the 'black hole') is no mere 'girl', but a 'daughter', a source of light, knowledge, and love for fathers, lovers, husbands:[18]

Imagine! A daughter stuck in a black hole,
Buried alive in a hideous pit
Among the rocks!

A daughter!

She is the light of life
The better part of a man's blood
The transformation of crude manhood
Into a creature to be loved by men
She is the reason for his being
She opens him up to himself
Through her he may know himself

---

[17] Quoted in Roche (1988) 242.

[18] Here, above all, the text bears witness to the fact that Kennelly originally intended his *Antigone* as a gift for his own daughter (Gotsi (2012) 86; cf. 77, 269).

And know more deeply the proud pain of love

A black hole among the rocks
No light
No light

Buried alive

Victim of love
Victim of law

Daughter in the darkness

Blind to the world of men.[19]

The black hole in which Antigone has been imprisoned appears as the negation of love and a symbol of man's failure to understand woman.[20]

Antigone and Ireland

Hugh Harkin, however, suggests that the black hole 'may refer to something much more prosaic':[21]

> The haunting image must surely have been disturbingly

[19] Cf., in the immediately following scene, the blind Tiresias' statement that Creon has 'condemned to darkness / A daughter of light' (p. 41).
[20] Cf. and contrast Roche (1988) 246; McCracken in Kennelly (1996) 55.
[21] Harkin (2008) 296-7.

> reminiscent of the fate of Ann Lovett, found dead in January 1984 in the grotto of Our Lady, in Granard, Co Longford. She was fifteen years old and had given birth on her way home from school, secretly and alone, to a stillborn child. She died of internal bleeding and exposure. She had gone to full term and it seemed certain that some of her family or friends (not to mention school authorities) must have been aware she was pregnant; and yet such was the suffocating culture of clericalism that nobody was prepared to support her. Writing in July 1984 of Antigone's banishment to 'the loneliest place in the world [...] a hole among the rocks' (p. 31), Kennelly may well have had Ann Lovett in mind.

This does seem likely. But even if not, the fate of Ann Lovett is indicative of the Ireland in which Kennelly wrote. Discussing (in an essay first published in 1988) Austin Clarke's poem, 'The Redemptorist',[22] he joins Clarke in railing at:

> the hypocrisy engendered by the violence of the institution of the Church, directed against its members, especially women. Some four thousand Irish girls go to England every year to have abortions there. This suits perfectly. There are, you see, no abortions in Ireland. That means we're pure. But you can have an abortion in England. Aren't the English terrible? As a race, we Irish are so casually hypocritical in such matters that it is almost unbelievable.
>
> And yet, precisely because of this blend of tyranny, hypocrisy and oppression, Irish poets have always celebrated the integrity, energy and heroic common-sense of women.

For Anthony Roche:

[22] Kennelly (1994) 39.

> it is no accident that all three [of Kennelly's versions of Greek tragedy] were written in the mid- to late 1980s, when Ireland was convulsed by debates and referenda having to do with the rights of women and control of their own sexual identity in relation to abortion and divorce.[23]

Just as it is hard to ignore the Irish dimension in the play's advocacy of pluralism and tolerance of difference or in its critique of the misogyny of male authority, so one cannot help applying to the author's own culture such themes as the father's attempt to transmit his enmities to his son or the horror of internecine conflict. Kennelly himself writes that his *Antigone* must 'be loyal to my experience of life in Ireland, in the modern world'.[24] In this, history plays a major role: the histories of the play's characters, he writes, whether personal, familial, or political, 'are like insistent, vigorous ghosts haunting every word that the characters say. This is a truly haunted play; the presence of the dead in the hearts and minds of the living is a fierce, driving and endlessly powerful force.' But this is a force that exerts as much pull on Ireland in the 1980s as it does in Sophocles' *Antigone*.[25] Katerina Gotsi sees a reflection of this in Antigone's 'love for the noble dead' (p. 10; cf. Creon on 'the noble dead', p. 13), finding in that phrase an echo of 'two of the most influential female figures of the Easter rising' of 1916, Eva Gore-Booth's poem 'Easter Week', which speaks of 'Grief for the

[23] Roche (2005) 150; cf. Roche (1988) 242; Macintosh (2011) 97.
[24] Kennelly (1996) 50.
[25] Cf. McDonald (2005) 128.

noble dead', and a speech by her sister, Constance Markievicz, to De Valera's Dáil Éireann in 1922.[26] Kennelly's published thoughts on Ireland's history of violence and its intersection with contemporary economic and political circumstances may be detectable in the contrast that he draws between Creon's fixation with money (pp. 16-17, 40) and the 'corruption' that arises from his exposure of the body (pp. 12, 13, 20) until he has finally 'corrupted the State' (p. 40),[27] while Ireland's literary past surfaces, according to Fiona Macintosh, in similarities between Antigone and the Irish heroine Deirdre.[28] Yet, if it is true that Kennelly's *Antigone* is 'the least obviously Hibernicized' of the 1980s versions (at least in terms of explicit interventions in its text and its close relation to the Sophoclean original), it is a measure of its power and its potential that the density of its thematic structure encompasses so many layers of meaning and application.

[26] See Gotsi (2012) 110-11.

[27] Cf. Kennelly (1994) 30: 'And there is an Ireland, increasingly, of money, with all the polished, ruthless violence that money can bring; an Ireland, increasingly, of big business and cut-throat competition; an Ireland that is busy burying peasant superstition and practising a new bourgeois style, with all that that means and implies. And meanwhile there are bombs in shops, in streets, outside police barracks; there are assassinations and revenge-killings and corrective kneecappings. And there are always the innocent victims of this savage, tireless historical process, this appetite for death.'

[28] Macintosh (2011) 97-100.

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